

## AMATEUR ARTISTS.

THE PERSONS WHO WORK FOR PLEASURE AND NOTORIETY.

The Reign of the Amateur and How It is Affecting the Various Professions in Which Mankind is Trying to Earn a Living—A Metropolitan View.

The other day a company of American artists seated at the cheap but filling refectory of Gruyere cheese and the beer of the country amused itself by discussing the serious want of patronage from which American art is just now suffering.

"I tell you," cried a young painter of great talent, "that the professional artist in this country is worse off than ever. There was a time some 15 or 20 years ago when his prospects looked bright and his outlook cheerful. But today he wastes all his time and energy on pot boiling, and even his pot boilers have to go to a sacrifice."

"There are too many of us," quoth one of his hearers. "The supply exceeds the demand, and we are simply paying, as in other walks of life, for the crime of overproduction."

"There are not too many of us," related the first speaker. "It's the infernal amateurs who are doing work almost as good as ours, and who are underselling us. It is the reign of the amateurs which has taken all the gift of the gingerbread of the professional."

True, almost true, in almost every highway and byway of modern industry. The amateur is rapidly displacing the professional to his own slight—sometimes imperceptible benefit, and always to the other's injury. When one stops to consider this truism, one is fairly stunned by the magnitude and quantity of the illustrations which prove it. Take, for instance, the field to which the discussion above quoted has relation. The woods are full of amateur "artists." Hardly a family now but has an "artistic" son or daughter who necessarily babbles the jargon of the craft and spoils more canvas and wastes more paint in a week than most professional artists can afford in a year.

Not only do their execrable compositions degrade the standard of art, they do worse and more material harm by making values ridiculously cheap. Glad to get anything at all—half the cost sometimes of the material they use. The amateur painters of New York alone constitute unconsciously a guild which practically starves out the profession. And the worst of it is that the amateur's work is nothing like as conspicuously bad in all instances as it used to be. Sketchy and thin as the best of it may be, it certainly complies with the elementary rules of art, and he must indeed be a bold critic who, comparing it with the efforts of trained and expert professionals, should unhesitatingly pronounce it without exception rot and rubbish.

The amateur actor and the amateur actress have inflicted incalculable injury on what calls itself specifically the profession. It is an open secret, for example, that the once profitable city of Brooklyn has been made a positively "bad show town," as the phrase goes, by the number and undacity of its amateurs. During the season they undertake performances of the severest professional character with a prodigality of energy and expenditure almost amounting to profligate extravagance which utterly eclipses the productions of the regular theaters. In fact, the Brooklyn amateurs have all but destroyed the professional drama in that city.

Again, the concert rooms of New York fairly swarm with unpaid vocalists who acquit themselves in many instances quite as well as their professional sisters and brothers, and there are already so many amateur instrumentalists in this city eager to play in public who have no urgent pecuniary need to do so that it is doubtful if the Musical Protective union dare order another general strike here, so enormous would be the rush of fairly competent amateur fiddlers and others to take the places of the strikers.

Rising higher in the social world, we find howling swells like Sufferer Tailor basing their reputations entirely on their knack of driving four-in-hands on amateur, so that the amateur coachman has become really an important public character and worthy of incessant notice.

The amateur wing shot is another social lion. Compared with the feats of the plain, uncelebrated every day pot hunters of Maryland and Pennsylvania, the performances of afield of George Work and Edgar Murphy and De Forrest Maurice and the rest of them seem positively puerile. But none the less are these latter knights of the trigger exalted and extolled by the newspapers as marvels of skill and vaunted among the possessions of which we ought all to be enthusiastically proud. For are they not amateurs?

At the present rate of development one cannot be certain of the ultimate limit of amateur expansion. We shall, beyond doubt, have amateur surgeons, amateur lawyers, amateur journalists, amateur barbers, amateur tailors, amateur plumbers, amateur icemen, even amateur day laborers, perhaps. Our streets will be patrolled by amateur policemen, our conflagrations extinguished by amateur firemen. And who can tell when the amateur will have so profoundly exhausted the honest occupations that he will have to become an amateur criminal?

Then shall we have our amateur burglars, our amateur pickpockets, our amateur highwaymen, our amateur murderers. The amateur shoplifter is already a formidable extant fact. What on earth is there in our social code to make the amateur homicide and the amateur river pirate impossible?

Yes, I faith, this is the reign of the amateur with a vengeance.—Archibald Gordon in New York Recorder.

## Instincts That Lead to Death.

Professor Mivart proved that there are "instincts" that lead to death by failing to adapt themselves to a change of circumstances. Migratory quail by thousands perish in the deserts of northern Africa, where their ancestors used to find a comfortable winter resort, abounding with forests and even with grainfields if we shall credit Pliny's account of the Numidian coast lands. The forests are gone, but myriads of quail still follow in the same route at the risk of starvation.—San Francisco Chronicle.

## Altogether Too Expensive.

Husband—I think I shall go out and catch a few fish for our dinner tomorrow.

Wife—No, Edwin, we must economize. Buy them of the regular dealer.—Detroit Free Press.

## WHEN HE BROUGHT THE BLACK SILK.

The One Thing in Life For Which Mrs. Young Longed Came Too Late.

It was no very exacting ambition that Robert Young's mother had cherished all her life. She lived very quietly on the western prairie farm to which she and her husband had gone together when they were both young. She did not expect to be rich or even think about it. She was content with the homely round of her daily life. Sometimes her husband used to say that if they had only happened to go here or there, where some of the friends of his youth had found copper or silver, or struck oil, they also might have been worth millions, but the wife always answered: "It wa'n't to be, John! wa'n't to be. And we've done pretty well as things go, but I should 'a' like one good black silk dress."

This was the only wish that Robert Young had ever heard his mother express, and he used to say to himself when he was a boy:

"Bless the dear mother! She shall have it the very first money I earn."

Robert's father, too, planned in his own mind the same thing, but one year the harvest turned out badly, and another the children had diphtheria, and so it was that the good black silk had never been bought.

It was a strange thing that the son of John and Rachel Young should have been an artist. But Robert began to draw before he could write, and at last he got hold of a box of colors through the kindness of one of his Sunday school teachers, and then he made pictures that dazzled the eyes of his prairie neighbors. As he was rapidly displacing the portraits from proud parents who were willing to give \$5 for a daughter's or a son's likeness, and he saved these small sums until by the time he was 18 he had enough money to take him to Boston, where he hoped to find a good teacher and to do something really worth while.

His struggle in the city was hard enough to begin with. Every snowstorm was a friend to him, for wherever he shoveled off steps and sidewalks they were sure to want him again, he did his work so cheerfully and so well.

He paid for his lessons by taking care of the studio of the artist under whom he studied. He was ready to do any honest thing to earn an honest penny, and at last, even in Boston, people found out that he had a special talent of his own and began to buy his pictures.

There were so many things at first to do with the money that he earned! He must have a little studio of his own where people could come, and it would not answer for the artist who had his own studio to live like the youth who used to shovel off sidewalks. He did not forget the good black silk dress or the mother who was to wear it; he only waited.

At last came a spring when he had been fairly prosperous, and he planned to go home for his mother's birthday in August and to carry the dress with him, but just then he received an invitation that flattered him. His former teacher was going to Ipswich for a summer of sketching and asked Robert to go with him.

It seemed an opportunity too good to be lost. So he went to Ipswich, and the summer flew by as if on wings, and Robert did not go home in August; he only wrote a letter.

It was October before he started for the far-off prairie farm. Once on his way, he hurried forward by night and day until he reached the little station that was nearest to his home. He had written when he should arrive, but he did not see his father waiting for him as he had expected. He felt a momentary sense of injury, but just then an old neighbor came up.

"I 'spose you might as well ride home tonight with me," he said. "I told 'em I'd fetch ye, as long as yer pa couldn't."

"Couldn't! Why?"

"Waal, I sorter hate to tell ye, but yer mother, she had a shock er palsy yesterday, and yer father don't like to leave her jest yet."

There was a strange choking in Robert Young's throat. The good black silk dress was in his valise, but he had brought it too late.—Youth's Companion.

## The Riches of Uninhabited Nicaragua.

Mr. J. Crawford, a well known resident of Managua, has just completed a tour covering about 13,000 square miles of territory of the republic of Nicaragua. Mr. Crawford reports that the uninhabited central mountainous part of the country is very rich in agricultural lands, excellent for raising coffee, tobacco, grapes, almonds, corn, potatoes, vegetables, sugar cane, rice, cocoa, indigo, plantains, mangoes, oranges, limes, lemons, bananas, etc. In the forests are to be found mahogany, cedar, rosewood, walnut, india rubber, nispero, guanacaste, etc. Its lodes are rich in gold and silver, while large deposits of marble, granite and magnesian limestone are to be found.—Panama Star.

## An Easter Surprise For the Czar.

Emperor Alexander found a short time since in a photographic album on his writing table a picture of the famous nihilist countess Sophie Perovskaya, who was hanged with the murderers of Alexander II. It is now stated that at Easter the czar received another disagreeable surprise. In his room at Livadia he found an exquisitely painted Easter egg. Inside it was a small silver dagger, two ivory carved death's heads and a slip of paper on which were these words: "Christ is risen. We also shall rise again!" In spite of all endeavors the secret police have not succeeded in finding out where either the portrait or the egg came from.—London News.

## The Poverty of Printed Language.

"God will keep up his end of the row if you give him a chance." That was the language used by Moderator Craig in his sermon, which had direct reference to the controversies before the general assembly. As it appears in print the sentence requires an expository note. Whether the word "row" rhymes with "how" or "hoe" becomes an important question.—Washington Star.

## Strength of the Horse.

A horse can draw on the worst kind of earth road about four times as much as he can carry on his back. On a good macadamized road he can pull 10 times as much; on a plank road 25 times as much, and on a street railway 58 times as much.—Chicago Journal.

## Beware of This Road.

Dora—What road did you travel over? Clara—The North Southern railroad, and I'll never patronize that line again either. Their caramels are horrid.—Good News.

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